

Slovakia's key goals and interests as regards

UKRAINE

1. Introduction

2. Background

3. The principal objectives and national interests of the Slovak Republic vis-a-vis Ukraine

4. Conclusion

1. Introduction

Successful development of Slovak-Ukrainian relations, which is in the interest of the Slovak Republic and its citizens, is among the priorities of Slovak foreign policy, set out in various programme and concept documents including the Government's Policy Statement, Foreign Policy Priorities for the 2000-2003 Period and the annually updated Foreign Policy Orientation of the Slovak Republic.

2. Background

Ukraine, whose foreign policy priorities include integration into the European Union, is of key strategic importance for the EU in the region of Eastern Europe. However, the accession of Ukraine to the EU is not yet on the agenda.

The need to implement a common EU strategy on Ukraine which lays stress on fostering the reform process in the country is given by the geopolitical position of Ukraine, situated along the North-South and East-West axes, its geographical size and the number of inhabitants, its key importance for the region, as well as shared values and common interests that are important for enhancing peace, stability and prosperity in Europe. These facts have found their reflection in the political steps of the EU which signed a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Ukraine, the first of the Newly Independent States to sign such an agreement, and became the largest donor of foreign assistance to Ukraine. With a view to reinforcing the strategic partnership, a Common Strategy of the European Union on Ukraine was adopted on 11 December 1999 at the EU summit in Helsinki, whose principal objectives are:

- support for the democratic and economic transition process in Ukraine in order to support successful political and economic transformation in Ukraine,
- ensuring stability and security and meeting common challenges on the European continent,
- support for strengthened cooperation between the EU and Ukraine within the context of EU enlargement.

Ukraine has special significance for the Slovak Republic. It is its largest neighbour that has traditional social, economic and cultural ties with Slovakia, including

similarities of languages and religions, and reciprocal presence of minorities. In the political field, Slovak-Ukrainian relations may be characterised as good neighbourly relations free of any outstanding issues, not burdened by problems of historical origin. In view of their similar historical experience and efforts at independence, the two countries have a solid base for mutual understanding and wide possibilities for cooperation. Its further enhancement, with special attention to trade and economic cooperation, is in the interest of the Slovak Republic and is one of its foreign policy priorities. Slovakia supports the efforts at building a democratic, economically strong and stable Ukraine and its integration into the European structures. Independence and sovereignty of Ukraine is an important security factor for the Slovak Republic as well.

3. The principal objectives and national interests of the Slovak Republic vis-a-vis Ukraine

The principal objective of the Slovak Republic is to develop Slovak-Ukrainian relations in a manner contributing to the maintenance of stability and prosperity in the region, and supporting the integration of both countries into the European political, security and economic structures. To reach this priority objective, the Slovak Republic has defined its following political, security and economic interests in relation to Ukraine:

(1) Political area:

- To permanently support the building of Ukraine as a politically and economically stable and prosperous country with transparent market economy and advanced democracy;
- To give support to Ukraine in reaching its declared objective of cooperation with the developed Europe, to promote the gradual translation of this objective into a real rapprochement with the European traditions of the rule of law and of a functioning market economy;
- To cooperate with Ukraine, in conformity with the principles of the Council of Europe and the OSCE, in the reciprocal exchange of experience and knowledge concerning the fulfilment of the commitments arising from international legal instruments and human rights conventions of the Council of Europe;
- To support, in harmony with the EU strategy on Ukraine, the ambition of Ukraine to integrate into the European structures. Rapprochement of the independent, safe and economically strong Ukraine with the EU and NATO is one of the prerequisites for increasing the level of security of Slovakia;
- To foster an intensive and systematic cooperation with members of the Slovak minority in Ukraine who have a great cultural and civic potential for our public diplomacy.

(2) Economic area:

- To ensure a balanced and dynamic development of mutually advantageous trade and economic relations with Ukraine by using effective tools of economic policy, strengthening economic cooperation in border regions, supporting accession of Ukraine to the WTO and CEFTA (subject to the fulfilment of the requirements) and the subsequent liberalisation of trade relations between the Slovak Republic and Ukraine;
- To support, in harmony with the national economy interests of the Slovak Republic, the participation of Ukraine in the implementation of specific projects in the area of energy and in the transit of energies to the Slovak Republic and other countries of central and western Europe, to intensively continue in the cooperation within the framework of the existing projects (such as the INOGATE framework convention).

(3) Security area:

- To ensure a high degree of cooperation in the area of the environment, energy and nuclear safety;
- To intensify and render more effective the regional and cross-border cooperation in all areas of interest for the Slovak Republic, by using the necessary instruments to make the common border sufficiently permeable (while ensuring adequate level of its effective protection), to fight organised crime and illegal migration (with a view to safeguarding the internal security of the Slovak Republic and fulfilling the principles of the Schengen agreement), to promote the development of transport nodes and the building of the necessary infrastructure;

To reinforce, both unilaterally and through the EAPC framework, the co-operation of the Slovak Republic with Ukraine in the area of the fight against the terrorism, to support Ukraine in the reform of its military forces, to provide Ukraine the experience acquired from the implementation of the MAP and to intensify the co-operation in the area of disarmament, of non-proliferation of massive destruction arms and of arms export control.

4. Conclusion

The success of Slovakia's foreign policy towards its neighbouring Ukraine is contingent on a realistic assessment of the situation, ability to use the existing opportunities and to cope with the limitations given by the international and internal situation at the given moment in time. A consistent and pragmatic approach must be taken in relation to Ukraine, taking into account the foreign policy and national economy interests of the Slovak Republic, with a view to reaching the overriding objective - the strengthening of the process of Slovakia's integration into the European political, security and economic structures.